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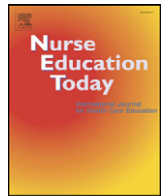
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Editorial

Nurse teaching and research: Symbiotic partners or estranged relatives?

Increasingly in countries where nursing is part of higher education (HE) provision, schools of nursing are called upon to produce simultaneously high quality teaching and research outcomes within increasingly difficult organisational environments. Indeed it has been argued that research has 'come to define the entire academic project of nursing' (Rolfé 2009, p.816). With growing financial pressures across the HE sector, workforce challenges mount, arguably to not only 'produce' graduates with increasingly advanced capabilities, but to also generate income within an environment of rising levels of competition for contracting pools of research funding (Thompson, 2009). Additional endeavours within these financially constrained times in the UK include the development of a new pre-registration curriculum and globally promoting online post-registration and postgraduate pathways within highly competitive and internationalised markets. In aligning resources to meet these challenges, nurse education providers may need to tackle a number of fundamentally strategic questions. One such question is: can, or indeed should, teaching and research activities be linked together, or alternatively dwell within what might be termed as 'organisational semi-permeable silos'? Ideally either alternative should culminate in both teaching and research activities within nursing faculties being enhanced. At the same time, all staff should feel valued.

Arguments about the integration (or lack thereof) of research and teaching have been aired for many years (Lucas, 2007). Perhaps a useful starting point to link research and teaching is to consider whether shared values exist between them. Within this context 'values' are understood as referring to both the mores and ideals of each, as well as the attitudes and beliefs of those engaging with teaching and/or research. Core shared purposes such as knowledge generation, promoting understanding and positively influencing attitudes, values and beliefs suggest that such shared values do exist. Additionally, both nurse led teaching and research seek to ethically improve health outcomes across diverse populations, empower individuals to be 'response enabled' towards their own health, and seek to strengthen the profile of the nursing profession. Consequently, a symbiotic relationship can be argued as existing; a symbiosis that is potentially enhanced through considering that strong research excellence outputs and strong teaching outcomes both attract strong candidates and staff to schools of nursing.

However, shared values offer only a foundation for linking teaching and research, a foundation that organisations and individual staff members may or may not build upon. On an individual level the melding or separating of these activities has much to do with professional identity. Such identities are both internally and externally generated and subsequently reinforced by labelling through titles such as 'researcher', 'lecturer' or 'teacher' (Giddens, 1997). Indeed, such fusions and tensions of professional identities and hence roles within nurse faculties reflect wider generic versus speciality nursing discourses, such as the pre-registration capabilities in the UK.

Those identifying themselves as lecturers within pre-registration programmes will use research to illustrate the benefits of critical thinking and critique concepts such as efficacy of care. Additionally, research will be used for informing teaching methods, providing a basis for evidenced based practice and to promote classroom epistemological and ontological discourses, as well as engaging in scholastic writing. Typically, those identifying themselves primarily as researchers will be research active as measured by their grant capture and citation indices, but they will also co-develop research modules for undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, and provide supervision of master's and doctoral students, provide expertise in substantive topics, theories and methodologies, as well as engage in scholastic writing. Those staff that identify themselves as both nurse teacher and nurse researcher will naturally meld some of the core activities from each of these identities. These 'generic' staff need to hold a genuine interest in research, teaching and writing and also need the support of the wider faculty team to pick up the remaining 'specialist' roles for which they do not have the capacity. Such generic working requires high levels of flexibility and time management skills to avoid superficial attending to either teaching or research responsibilities and risks not being identified with either of the specialised academic groups. Despite these challenges such generic roles offer the opportunity to improve quality and make connections between research, teaching and curriculum design easier. Additionally, teaching can be less structured and more discourse based due to better knowledge and understandings gleaned from research participation. Arguably however, those specialising in either teaching or research are able to have a depth of specialised activities and knowledge that such generic working makes difficult to attain. However, we argue that this is a model that best uses people to their individual strengths with a corporate and meaningfully shared purpose that allows an organisation to flourish.

Organisationally, significant linking of teaching and research will also have content compatibility. Such compatibility would not only reflect a breadth of curriculum content and research focus towards for example, long term conditions, cancer care and mental health, but also axiomatic nursing themes such as safety and effectiveness. Clearly communicated organisational visions on melding teaching and research that are then supported by applicable staffing policies will encourage research capability. Appointing research mentors, ensuring protected time for academic staff to engage in research activities, exciting seminar programmes and timetabling research presentations as part of the curriculum are some examples of this capability building.

Arguably, one of the most important organisational actions to successfully meld teaching and research is to establish an organisational culture that caters for diversity. Only through communicating and enacting tangible equality of value to those staff who teach, who

research or who mix these together can the successful fusion of teaching and research be attained through the actions of motivated and enabled staff.

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